



## GREEN SPRING GARDENS

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### Native Shrubs for the Washington, D.C. Area

Native shrubs are treasured additions to gardens due to their beauty throughout the seasons and year-round structure. They provide invaluable food and cover to birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife. Most of these plants are native to Virginia: these plants existed in Virginia before Jamestown, Virginia was founded in 1607. A few listed species are not native to Virginia but are native to other states in the southeastern U.S.

Deciduous shrubs are some of the most useful and exciting plants in the landscape. Because their leaves die and fall off in the autumn, they have changing interest throughout the year - they are valued for their flowers, fruits, foliage, and twigs, and for their varied shapes and textures. Embellish your landscape with these beautiful yet functional plants!

Evergreen shrubs are valued for their relatively constant foliage year-round. Many evergreen shrubs have other attractive features, such as beautiful flowers and fruit. To maximize landscape interest, combine evergreen shrubs with deciduous shrubs and other plants in your landscape.

The following are useful definitions:

- Cultivar (cv.) - a cultivated variety designated by single quotes, such as 'Brilliantissima'. A **variety (var.)** or **subspecies (subsp.)**, in contrast, is found in nature and is a subdivision of a species.
- Full Shade - the amount of light under a dense deciduous tree canopy or beneath evergreens.
- Full Sun – 6 hours or more of sun daily.
- Part Shade - the amount of light in an area shaded part of the day, among deciduous trees with high branches, among deciduous trees with foliage that is not heavy, or among thinned deciduous woods.

The following is a list of native medium-sized and small shrubs that perform well in the Washington, D.C. area. Deciduous shrubs are listed first. Most of these shrubs prefer a moist, well-drained site. Light requirements and other cultural requirements or tolerances are noted in the comments column. Recommended cultivars are noted, including Gold Medal Award winners [Gold Medal Plant Awards are given annually by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society to underused woody plants that perform especially well in gardens from New York City to Washington, D.C.].

#### NATIVE MEDIUM-SIZED DECIDUOUS SHRUBS (5-12 FEET TALL)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
<i>Aesculus parviflora</i> (native to Ala., Ga., & S.C.) [Gold Medal Award]	Bottlebrush Buckeye	Light shade to part shade. Suckers so not for small spaces.

<p><i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> &amp; 'Brilliantissima' [Gold Medal Award]</p> <p><i>A. melanocarpa</i> – small to medium-sized shrub. Iroquois Beauty ('Morton') is shorter than average.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> <i>A. prunifolia</i> (<i>A. floribunda</i>; purple chokeberry) - harder to purchase but a nice plant.</p>	<p>Red Chokeberry</p> <p>Black Chokeberry</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; moist to wet sites best. Slowly suckers.</p>
<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	American Beautyberry	Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites. Grown for light purple fruit in the fall. Best from more northern germplasm.
<i>Calycanthus floridus</i> ('Michael Lindsey' - [Gold Medal Award])	Eastern Sweetshrub, Carolina Allspice	Light shade to part shade
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> & cultivars including 'Ruby Spice' [Gold Medal Award] & 'September Beauty'	Summersweet (medium-sized forms)  <b>Note:</b> See short cultivars in the next section.	Full sun to part shade; moist to wet sites best. Slowly suckers.
<p><i>Cornus amomum</i> - young stems are not colorful in the winter as the species below</p> <p><i>C. sericea</i> ('Hedgerows Gold' is variegated) - usually colorful stems in the winter for the species &amp; cultivars</p>	<p>Silky Dogwood</p> <p>Redosier Dogwood</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; tolerate wet soils; dogwood sawfly is a problem in some sites</p> <p>For <i>C. sericea</i> to produce colorful winter stems - renewal prune yearly for best winter stem color (no more than 1/3 of the stems removed in a given year – prune out oldest stems). 'Cardinal' does not have good winter color in our area compared to up north where it was selected.</p>
<p><i>Cyrilla racemiflora</i></p> <p>(for the native plant collector)</p>	Swamp Cyrilla, Swamp Titi	Full sun to light shade; prefers moist to wet soils. Interesting species with twisting branches.
<i>Fothergilla</i> 'Mount Airy' (cross of <i>F. gardenii</i> x <i>F. major</i> ; both species are native to NC & further south) [Gold Medal Award]	Hybrid Fothergilla	Full sun to part shade in moist sites. The parents of this cross have been harder to grow at Green Spring ( <i>F. gardenii</i> is smaller & needs constantly moist sites).

<p><i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i> (native to Tenn. &amp; several southeastern states) <b>Taller cultivars:</b> *Snowflake ('Brido') - double-flowered white *Snow Queen ('Flemygea') [Gold Medal Award] – single-flowered white</p> <p>The following are relatively new selections or are becoming more available: these sound promising: *‘Alice’ - vigorous white-flowered form with single flowers &amp; reported to be tolerant of full sun. *‘Amethyst’ – flowers start out white &amp; turn wine-red *Jetstream ('PIIHQ-I') – upright flowers open white &amp; turn pink; reported to have an orange-red fall color ‘Queen of Hearts’ – upright flowers open white &amp; turn pink</p> <p><b>Shorter cultivars:</b> ‘Sikes Dwarf’ - older cultivar with white flowers (short for several years &amp; eventually medium-sized)</p> <p>Two newer short cultivars (loved by deer at Green Spring): *‘Munchkin’ – flowers turn from white to pink *‘Ruby Slippers’ - flowers open white &amp; transition from pink to rose</p>	<p>Oakleaf Hydrangea</p>	<p>Light shade to full shade. Blooms on old wood so best to prune after flowering if needed (seldom needs pruning).</p>
<p><i>Ilex verticillata</i> &amp; cultivars: ‘Scarlett O’Hara’ [Gold Medal Award]. Male pollinator is ‘Rhett Butler’.</p> <p>[‘Winter Red’ &amp; ‘Winter Gold’ - both won Gold Medal Award] Male pollinator for ‘Winter Red’ &amp; ‘Winter Gold’ is ‘Southern Gentleman’ (pollinator for southern type, fast-growing cultivars).</p>	<p>Winterberry Holly</p>	<p>Full sun to part shade; best in moist to wet sites (fruits better with moisture &amp; sun).</p> <p>The wild type of <i>Ilex verticillata</i>, can eventually grow to be a large shrub, &amp; fruit is more palatable to birds.</p> <p>Newer cultivars are under evaluation.</p>
<p><i>Lindera benzoin</i></p>	<p>Spicebush</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade - moist sites best (good fall color in shade)</p>

<p><i>Myrica pensylvanica</i> or <i>Morella pensylvanica</i></p> <p><b>Note:</b> <i>M. cerifera</i> (Wax Myrtle) is evergreen but often is harder to establish in our area.</p>	Northern Bayberry	Full sun; salt tolerant; tolerates dry sites but dieback after some very dry years; can be hard to establish plants in some sites initially
<p><i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> &amp; cultivars:  <b>Gold leaves:</b> 'Dart's Gold' &amp; 'Nugget'</p> <p><b>Purple leaves:</b>  Diabolo ('Monlo')  [Gold Medal Award; Diablo is a synonym] &amp;  Summer Wine ('Seward'; shorter cultivar)</p> <p><b>Purple leaves with a bit of gold in the middle:</b>  'Center Glow'</p> <p><b>Coppery leaves in spring &amp; reddish in summer:</b>  Coppertina ('Mindia')</p>	Ninebark	<p>Full sun to light shade; species type is best for naturalistic use; tolerant of dry sites (especially in light shade) but looks best in moist sites</p> <p>Newer cultivars available including shorter selections. .</p>
<p><i>Rhododendron</i> - deciduous azalea species native to Virginia:  <i>R. arborescens</i>  (Species is white to rose colored. A pink-flowered form has been more vigorous in gardens. 'Pink and Sweet' is <i>R. arborescens</i> x <i>R. arborescens</i> hybrid)</p> <p><i>R. calendulaceum</i> &amp; cultivars</p> <p><i>R. periclymenoides</i>  (the toughest species)</p> <p><i>R. prinophyllum</i> ('Marie Hoffman' has bloomed well but looks like it might be a hybrid)</p> <p><i>R. viscosum</i> &amp; cultivars  ('Lemon Drop' is slightly fragrant – some forms are very fragrant. 'Betty Cummins' looks promising.)</p>	<p>Sweet Azalea</p> <p>Flame Azalea</p> <p>Pinxterbloom Azalea</p> <p>Roseshell Azalea</p> <p>Swamp Azalea</p>	<p>Light shade to part shade in general. Most prefer moist sites – of this group <i>R. periclymenoides</i> is the most tolerant of dry sites. <i>R. arborescens</i> &amp; <i>R. viscosum</i> like more moisture (moist to at least periodically wet sites).</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 'White Lightning' is a natural hybrid of <i>R. arborescens</i> with <i>R. calendulaceum</i> or <i>R. cumberlandense</i>.</p>

<p><i>Rhododendron atlanticum</i> &amp; hybrids - 'Marydel' (cross of <i>R. atlanticum</i> &amp; <i>R. periclymenoides</i>). 'Choptank Yellow' has the same parentage but a different flower color. A similar cross at Green Spring originally found in the wild is medium-sized.</p>	Coast Azalea & Hybrids	<p>Light shade to part shade; fairly tolerant of dry sites. This species &amp; the hybrids are often shorter than the above species (some are small shrubs).</p> <p>These hybrids often occur naturally in the wild. The Choptank hybrids were originally selected from natural populations in the Maryland &amp; Delaware border area. Other hybrid cultivars include 'Choptank Rose' &amp; 'Rosy Cheeks'.</p>
<p><i>Rhododendron</i> - deciduous azalea species native to other southeastern states. Includes some of their cultivars:  <i>R. alabamense</i> (native to Tenn. &amp; other southeastern states)</p> <p><i>R. austrinum</i> &amp; cultivars (native from Ga. to Miss.) – also frequently used to create hybrid cultivars</p> <p><i>R. flammeum</i> &amp; cultivars (native to GA &amp; SC) - bloomed well (small so far but eventually supposed to be medium-sized)</p>	<p>Alabama Azalea</p> <p>Florida Azalea</p> <p>Onocee Azalea</p>	<p>Of this group <i>R. alabamense</i> has been the most tolerant of dry sites but prefers moist sites.</p> <p>Some <i>R. austrinum</i> plants have had winter kill on some branches following dry summers &amp; cold winters.</p> <p>Green Spring is evaluating hybrids of many species as well. 'Coleman's Early Yellow' is possibly a hybrid of <i>R. austrinum</i> &amp; <i>R. alabamense</i>. 'My Mary' is a hybrid of 3 native species.</p>
<p><i>Rhus aromatica</i></p> <p><i>R. copallinum</i></p> <p><i>R. glabra</i></p> <p><i>R. typhina</i> &amp; cultivars: 'Dissecta' ('Laciniata') &amp; Tiger Eyes ['Bailtiger' – Gold Medal Award; golden foliage &amp; more compact than the species]</p>	<p>Fragrant Sumac</p> <p>Shining Sumac</p> <p>Smooth Sumac</p> <p>Staghorn Sumac</p>	<p>Full sun; tolerate dry sites; suckers</p> <p>The species type of <i>R. typhina</i>, <i>R. copallinum</i>, &amp; <i>R. glabra</i> can become large shrubs.</p> <p>Unfortunately, deer damage large plants in the rut (breeding season).</p>

<p><i>Viburnum dentatum</i> - native forms tend to have red-yellow fall color, while Red Feather ('JN Select') has red-purple fall color.</p> <p><i>V. nudum</i> (var. <i>nudum</i>) - Brandywine ('Bulk') &amp; 'Winterthur' [Gold Medal Award]</p> <p><b>A native species best for naturalistic use:</b> <i>V. acerifolium</i></p>	<p>Arrowwood Viburnum</p> <p>Smooth Withe-rod Viburnum, Possumhaw Viburnum</p> <p>Mapleleaf Viburnum</p>	<p>Full sun to light shade; tolerate dry sites. Blue Muffin ('Christom'; reported to be smaller than the species type but just grows more slowly when young). Full sun to part shade. Likes moist to wet sites.</p> <p>Light shade to part shade; tolerates dry sites</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Viburnums are generally self-incompatible &amp; need two plants of the same species with different genetic backgrounds to produce fruit.</p>
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### Medium-sized Native Shrubs Best for Naturalistic Use or Special Habitat Uses

(naturalistic use - native plants that, when properly sited, perform well with minimal care; best used in an informal design that suggests a natural landscape, or for the restoration of native plant communities):

*Alnus serrulata* (Smooth Alder) - wetlands & wet areas. Other native species also available from native plant nurseries.

*Amelanchier spicata* or *A. stolonifera* (Running Serviceberry) - wildlife gardening

*Cephalanthus occidentalis* (Buttonbush) – consistently moist or wet soils; full sun best

*Corylus americana* & *C. cornuta* (Hazelnut) - wildlife gardening but loved by deer to the point that they can kill it

*Euonymus americana* (American Euonymus, Bursting Heart) & *E. atropurpurea* (Eastern Wahoo – can eventually become a large shrub)

*Rosa carolina*, *R. palustris*, & *R. virginiana* (Native Roses) – often sucker extensively & many thorns

*Sambucus nigra* subsp. *canadensis* (*S. canadensis*) (American Elderberry) - wildlife gardening

### NATIVE SMALL DECIDUOUS SHRUBS (2-5 FEET TALL)

Scientific Name	Common Name	Comments
<p><i>Clethra alnifolia</i> - short cultivars: 'Hummingbird' [Gold Medal Award; a tough cultivar] &amp; Sugartina ('Crystalina'; looks promising)</p> <p>(the species itself &amp; most cultivars are medium-sized)</p>	Summersweet	<p>Full sun to part shade; tolerant of wet soils; slowly suckers</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 'Sixteen Candles' performs well in some location &amp; not in others (needs a moist site). Vanilla Spice ('Caleb') leafs out later than the others so be patient &amp; don't cut it back.</p>

<p><i>Hydrangea arborescens</i> (lacecap flowers) &amp; cultivars. 'Annabelle' [Gold Medal Award; double flowers].</p> <p>Two newer double-flowered cultivars are not in the Green Spring collection: Incrediball ('Abetwo') has larger flowerheads than 'Annabelle' &amp; stronger stems. Invincibelle Spirit ('NCHA1') has dark pink flowers that are slightly smaller than 'Annabelle'.</p>	Smooth Hydrangea	<p>Species type is loved by deer. Blooms on new wood so can prune in the spring.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> newer introductions with lacecap-type flowers are also not in the Green Spring collection, such as 'White Dome'.</p>
<p><i>Itea virginica</i></p> <p>Taller cultivars include 'Henry's Garnet' [Gold Medal Award], 'Longspire', 'Sarah Eve', &amp; 'Saturnalia'.</p> <p>Little Henry ('Sprich') is a short cultivar &amp; vigor is too low in some locations – especially if the site is too dry.</p>	Virginia Sweetspire	<p>Full sun to part shade; tolerant of wet or dry sites; suckers slowly.</p> <p>'Henry's Garnet' has the best, most reliable fall color. Little Henry has nice fall color in good sites.</p>
<i>Leucothoe racemosa</i> ( <i>Eubotrys racemosa</i> )	Sweetbells Leucothoe	Full sun to part shade; prefers moist to wet sites
<i>Rhus aromatica</i> 'Gro-Low' (the species itself is usually medium-sized)	Gro-Low Sumac	Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites. Grown mostly for beautiful red fall color.
<i>Spiraea alba</i> (var. <i>latifolia</i> )	White Meadowsweet	Full sun in consistently moist sites best. Other species found in Virginia like consistently moist to wet sites (testing at Green Spring).
<i>Symphoricarpos orbiculatus</i>	Coralberry	Full sun & tolerant of dry sites; suckers. Good wildlife plant

**Small Native Shrubs Primarily for Naturalistic Use, Special Habitat Uses, or Fruit Production: -**

*Diervilla lonicera* (Bush Honeysuckle)

*Vaccinium stamineum* (Deerberry; fruit not eaten by humans) & *V. corymbosum* (Highbush Blueberry; fruit delicious to humans – the blueberry we most commonly eat; likes acid, moist to periodically wet sites, & prefers sandier or rockier soils; fruits better in full sun)

*Zenobia pulverulenta* (Dusty Zenobia) - blue-leaved forms are the showiest

**NATIVE MEDIUM-SIZED EVERGREEN SHRUBS (5-12 FEET TALL)**

<p><i>Illicium floridanum</i> (native to Fla., Ga., &amp; other southeastern states) 'Halley's Comet' [Gold Medal Award]</p>	Florida Anise-Tree	Light shade to part shade
<p><i>Juniperus</i> 'Grey Owl' (at least some parentage is the native <i>J. virginiana</i>)</p>	Grey Owl Juniper	Full sun; tolerates dry sites; a female form with blue cones

<i>Kalmia latifolia</i> (many cultivars are available - 'Olympic Fire' has been one of the best performers at Green Spring)	Mountain Laurel	Light shade to part shade; best in naturally moist sites with good drainage – doesn't like a lot of overhead irrigation (disease problems). The shorter cultivars didn't have enough vigor to perform well.
<i>Rhododendron maximum</i>	Rosebay Rhododendron	Light shade to part shade in moist sites with good drainage
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i> - dwarf & slow-growing cultivars  Gold cultivars: 'Sunkist' & the taller Techny Gold ('Walter Brown') – both 10 – 15 ft. tall  Green Cultivars: 'Hetz Midget' is a small cultivar (3-4 ft), as is 'Umbraculifera'. 'Filiformis' grows slowly to 6 ft.  'Emerald' ('Smaragd') grows slowly to 15 ft tall - fairly narrow	Dwarf & Slow Growing Eastern Arborvitae Cultivars	Full sun to light shade; tolerates dry sites

#### NATIVE SMALL EVERGREEN SHRUBS (2-5 FEET TALL)

<i>Ilex glabra</i> cultivars: Some of the best include Nordic ('Chamzin') & 'Shamrock' (the most compact form)  <i>I. opaca</i> 'Maryland Dwarf' & 'Clarendon Spreading' ('Clarendon' – both are dwarf selections)	Inkberry Holly   Dwarf American Holly Cultivars	Full sun to light shade in moist or periodically wet sites. The species type is taller & for naturalistic use.  Full sun to part shade; tolerates dry sites
<i>Leucothoe fontanesiana</i>  <b>Note:</b> <i>L. axillaris</i> is more prone to drought stress	Drooping Leucothoe	Light shade to part shade
<i>Pinus strobus</i> dwarf cultivars such as 'Blue Jay', 'Horsford', & 'Merrimack'	Dwarf & Slow Growing Eastern White Pine Cultivars	Full sun; mostly for plant collectors. Were good performers on well-drained, north-facing slope at Green Spring & the Rock Garden, but in level sites these dwarf forms have died when fairly young (fungal pathogens). Snow damage in years with heavy snow sometimes is too much so they need to be removed.

#### Scientific Names Of Plants - Current Names Are From:

- **Encyclopedia of Life** (<http://eol.org/>) – institutional partners include Harvard University, the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Smithsonian Institution, and The Field Museum.
- **Tropicos** from the Missouri Botanical Garden (<http://tropicos.org/>)

If a second scientific name is given, it is usually an old name that is still seen in some references or used by some nurseries. However, the above databases do not always agree on names.

#### Other References: -

**Flora of Virginia.** Alan Weakley, J. Christopher Ludwig, and John Townsend. 2012. BRIT Press. Botanical



Research Institute of Texas.

The **Kemper Center for Home Gardening Plantfinder** at the Missouri Botanical Garden is an excellent reference for plant names, gardening information, and photographs (<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx>) It features plants in their Kemper Center display gardens and is an excellent website about ornamental plants.

The Lady Bird Wildflower Center at the University of Texas in Austin has developed the **Native Plant Information Network** for native plants ([www.wildflower.org/explore/](http://www.wildflower.org/explore/)).

**USDA PLANTS Database** (<http://plants.usda.gov/>) - this database focuses on plants native to the U.S. and to U.S. Territories and Protectorates, as well as naturalized non-natives and invasives. It is also used to determine distribution within Virginia by county.

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